

general improvement in knowledge, have no disposition for the real business of thinking even in religion, and that their discourse on that subject is the exposure of intellectual poverty. He has seen them live on for a number of years content with the same confined views, the same meagre list of topics, and the same uncouth religious language. In so considerable a space of time, the habitual inquisitive-ness after various truth would have given much more clearness to their faculties, and much more precision to the articles of their belief. They might have ramified the few leading articles into a rich variety of subordinate principles and important inferences. They might have learned to place the Christian truth in all those combinations with the other parts of our knowledge, by which it is enabled to present new and striking aspects, and to multiply its arguments to the understanding, and its appeals to the heart. They might have enriched themselves by rendering nature, history, and the present views of the moral world, tributary to the illustration and the effect of their religion. But they neglected, and even despised, all these means of enlarging their ideas of a subject which they professed to hold of infinite importance. Yet perhaps, if this man of more intellectual habits showed but little interest in conversing with them on that subject, or seemed intentionally to avoid it, this was considered as pure aversion to religion; and what had been uninteresting to him as doctrine, then became revolting as reproof.*

He may not unfrequently have heard worthy but illiterate persons expressing their utmost admiration of sayings, passages in books, or public discourses, which he could not help perceiving to be hardly sense, or to be the dictates of conceit, or to be common-place inflated to fustian. While on the other hand, if he has introduced a favourite passage, or an admired book, they have perhaps acknowledged no perception of its beauty, or expressed a doubt of its tendency, from its not being in canonical diction. Or perhaps they have directly avowed that they could not understand it, in a manner plainly implying that *therefore* it could be of no value. Possibly when he has expressed his high admiration

* I own that what I said of Jesus Christ's gladly receiving one of the humbler intellectual order for his disciple, would be but little applicable to some of the characters that I Describe.